

“Blessed . . . to Be a Blessing!”—Luke 8:38-39

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Blessed . . . to Be a Blessing!”, is Luke 8:38-39 → *The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with Him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, “Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.” And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord (cf. 1Timothy 1:2). Amen.

Mysteries—those experiences in life which leave you wondering in awe and astonishment, groping for an explanation. It seems God created human beings with the desire to delve deeper and deeper into that which is a mystery in an effort to figure it all out. From exploring the workings of the universe to discovering new ways to harness it’s power to use hopefully as a blessing in our lives, the desire to “unpack” the unknown is natural for us all.

As people encountered the blessings of Yahweh in the Person of Jesus during His earthly ministry, they encountered many mysteries. Luke chapters seven and eight record some of them during Jesus’

Galilean ministry: He healed the centurion's servant **without having to be in the servant's presence** (cf. Luke 7:1-10); He raised a widow's son from the dead **during his funeral** (cf. Luke 7:11-17); He forgave people of their sins (i.e. pronounced absolution), **something only God can do** (cf. Luke 7:36-50); He calmed a storm **simply by His command** (cf. Luke 8:22-25); He drove demons out of people (cf. Luke 8:2,26-39) and performed numerous healings and other miracles (cf. Luke 8:40-56). Mysterious acts bringing the blessings of Yahweh indeed!

In the midst of such mysterious works we hear peoples' responses. Luke 7:16 says: *Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited His people!"* Some recognized they were standing in the presence of God Himself. This produced fear with an awareness of their sinfulness in the presence of the holy God as well as fear in the sense of respect for His power. Some were shocked by His mysterious ways: *Who is this, Who even forgives sins?* (cf. Luke 7:49) His disciples *were afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another, "Who then is this, that He commands even winds and water, and they obey Him?"* (cf. Luke 8:25) When He drove out the demons from the man in our text, Luke 8:37 says *all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked Him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear.*

Beware . . . such wonderment and awe can lead you into researching the “mysteries” of Jesus actually to your detriment. How? It has led many people into in-depth study and research in an effort to understand demon possession and what later came to be called “exorcisms;” to understand healings and figure out how to heal in this mysterious manner; and explain other miraculous signs and wonders (cf. Acts 2:22; 10:38). In an effort to satisfy the inquiring mind, the real purpose of Jesus’ miraculous works can be missed. John 20:30-31 states that primary purpose: *Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.* They are not written so that you can entertain yourself by trying to figure out what demon possession is, or try to control healing, or define what constitutes a miracle and so forth, in an effort to take control of these dynamics in life. Such sin is rooted in idolatry.

Rather, they were done and are recorded so *that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ . . . and that by believing you may have life in His name.* When John the Baptizer sent his disciples to ask if Jesus was *the One Who is to come*, His answer, after healing *many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits*, was to point them to these miraculous signs and wonders as evidence that He was *the Christ*, the Messiah promised

by the Old Testament prophets (cf. Luke 7:18-23). These mysterious wonders and works were not meant to lead you down “rabbit holes” which lead you away from *the Christ*. They were intended to lead you to repentance of your sins and trust in the atoning work of the Christ. They were intended to lead you to *believe that Jesus is the Christ . . . and that by believing you may have life in His name*. Get off the miracle and trust in the Miracle Worker, Jesus.

Experiencing such mysterious signs and wonders may have moved many to fear Jesus and want Him out of their sight. Not so for the man released from the power of the demons. Verse 38 of our text says: *The man from whom the demons had gone **begged** that he might be with Jesus!* And why not? This is what the Holy Spirit creates with faith and regeneration. Experiencing the blessings of God’s grace and mercy in Jesus Christ will move you to *be with* Jesus by reading your Bible, prayer, worshiping together as members of His body (cf. Colossians 3:12-17) and meeting Him at the altar for the forgiveness of your sins in His body and blood (cf. Matthew 26:26-28). This man’s desire was simply a natural display of his faith in Jesus as *the Christ!*

However, as Jesus’ response to this man shows, there is another purpose for experiencing the blessing of God’s grace and steadfast love in the Person & Work of Jesus Christ. You are blessed . . . to be a blessing! Our text says that *Jesus sent him away, saying, “Return to*

your home, and declare how much God has done for you.” The blessings of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life through faith in Jesus as *the Christ* is for all people. How are all people going to receive those blessings?

Jesus instructs us in Matthew 9:38 → *Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.* Romans 10:14-15 asks the questions: *How can people believe in Him of Whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?* Thus, we pray for, train, send and support missionaries to take the Good News of Jesus into places we ourselves cannot necessarily go. However, Jesus told this man to go home.

This is the primary place for you to be a blessing by bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to others in the midst of your daily vocations of life. As a son, as a brother, as a community member, as a citizen, as a friend—there were many vocations he fulfilled “at home” where He could *declare how much God had done for him*. Notice he was not instructed to convince or persuade the people in his circle of relationships to believe in Jesus. It’s a matter of simply striving to be faithful to Jesus while living out those relationships as the Holy Spirit does work through the Gospel we live.

Thus, the instructions given in Scripture to you as you fulfill your

various vocations in life: as a wife—*Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord*; as a husband—*Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them*; as a child—*Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord*; as a father—*Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged*; as a worker—*Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men*; as an employer—*Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.* (cf. Colossians 3:18-4:1) We are also given instructions as Christian citizens, as members of a congregation, and so forth. Because you are blessed in the forgiveness of sins and eternal life through faith in Jesus to be a blessing with the Gospel in your daily vocations of life, the Small Catechism included a “Table of Duties” listing these vocations and Bible verses dealing with each one.

The miraculous, mysterious signs and wonders performed by Jesus pointed to His ultimate defeat of the devil’s power by His death on the cross where He miraculously redeemed you from hell. They pointed to His resurrection where He defeated the sting of death so you get to experience His miraculous resurrection from the dead on the Last Day! In the meantime, you are blessed so that you can be a blessing to others as the Holy Spirit produces in you that which He produced in this healed demoniac: *He went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how*

much Jesus had done for him. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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